

Senator Lisa Brown

2004 Legislative Update



I want to hear from you!

Olympia Office:

332 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40403
Olympia, WA 98504-0403
Phone: (360) 786-7604
Fax: (360) 786-1999

District Office:

35 W. Main, Suite 375
Spokane, WA 99201
Phone: (509) 456-2760

E-mail: brown_li@leg.wa.gov

Web Site: www.sdc.wa.gov/brown.htm

Toll-Free Legislative Hot Line:

(800) 562-6000
(800) 635-9993 (TTY)

Government Web Sites

Washington State
Legislature Home Page:
www.leg.wa.gov

Senate Democratic
Caucus Home Page:
www.sdc.wa.gov

TVW: www.tvw.org

Access Washington:
<http://access.wa.gov>

Dear Neighbors,

I hope the New Year is treating you well. I'm back in Olympia for what I hope will be a short, 60-day legislative session. By the time you receive this, we'll be close to half-way done.

This newsletter will provide you with a quick summary of the bills I am working on and some of the issues that are likely to be important.

As always, I am honored to serve as your state senator. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you have.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brown

State Senator

3rd Legislative District

Town Hall

My seatmates, Reps. Alex Wood and Timm Ormsby, and I will be hosting a town hall forum in Spokane.

Saturday, Feb. 28

Roosevelt Elementary School, Multipurpose Room
333 W. 14th Ave.
Spokane, WA 99204

If you want to learn more about the issues that affect you the most, I hope you'll save the date and join us. For more information, please call my office or check my Web site: www.sdc.wa.gov/brown.htm.

Bills for the 2004 Session

Farmers' Market (SB 6214)

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides fresh produce to low-income mothers and children. Currently, 13 other counties participate in the program — but Spokane County is the only one that pays to be a part of it.

That's why I've put together a bill that would increase state funding for the program by \$100,000. The increase would also draw a federal match of \$233,000. With this measure, not only are we supporting local farms, we're helping ensure that women, infants and children have access to healthy food.

Mental Health Parity (SB 6484)

A recent report in the *Spokesman-Review* revealed that more than 300,000 mentally ill people live in Washington. And as of Jan. 1, in Spokane County as many as 900 mentally ill people — one-third of the county's caseload — lost their coverage.

Recognizing that mental health treatment is as vital to a person's well-being as heart surgery or chemotherapy, I am sponsoring a measure that would require all health plans regulated by the state, as well as the Basic Health Plan and public employees' plans, to provide mental health services on the same basis as other health services.

Health Care: Project Access (SB 6504)

At a time when people have less access to health care, and are finding it harder to afford prescription drugs, Spokane is lucky to have Project Access. It provides charity health care services and prescription drugs to the uninsured.

Last session we passed a bill that created the state's prescription drug discount program, available only to people older than 50 with low incomes. This session, I am sponsoring a bill that would allow anyone with access to charity health care, including Project Access, to be eligible for the same prescription discount.

Spokane River/Coeur d'Alene Basin (SJM 8033)

Millions of tons of contaminated mining wastes exist throughout the Spokane and Coeur d'Alene basins. While most of the mining and waste deposits occurred in Idaho, they may migrate with stormwater runoff and other activities downstream to Washington.

A cleanup effort is under way, but the focus is on the Idaho side of the border under an Idaho-created commission with only one Washington representative. I'm sponsoring a memorial asking the governor of Idaho and the Idaho Legislature to correct these problems.

Budget Priorities for the 2004 Session

Operating

Rolling Back Health Care Premiums for Kids

Last session, the Legislature voted to impose monthly Medicaid premiums on children in low-income families — families that don't have enough money to cover even their most basic needs. This session, I hope we can roll back these unfair and costly premiums.

Child Care

High-quality child care is the first step to success in school. Unfortunately, child care providers in our community are being priced out of business.

After years of hard work, last session I was pleased to finally get a proviso in the budget that called on the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to include an urban adjustment factor for child care providers in Spokane County. It meant more financial assistance for providers.

Unfortunately, no funds were budgeted to implement the directive. This session I'm working to help ensure that that proviso gets the funding it needs. Parents will be able to continue working, children can continue to learn and providers can continue offering this labor of love.

Spokane Aquifer

I'm also working on securing some additional funding to study the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie aquifer. As you know, a slow-moving river flows underneath the Spokane River from northern Idaho to Spokane. It supplies water to 400,000 people in both states, but no one knows how much water is in the aquifer. This study will help clarify long-unanswered questions about a precious — yet finite — resource.

Capital

The capital budget is funded by issuing bonds under a state debt limit.

- **Riverpoint Academic Center, Washington State University-Spokane.** The building will house the campus library, classrooms, student services and faculty offices.
- **Senior Hall, Eastern Washington University.** Built in 1920, this building has received no major renovation since then.
- **Intercollegiate College of Nursing Facility, WSU-Spokane.** A new facility is planned to accommodate the future expansion of the program.
- **Fox Theater.** Built in 1931, the theater's acoustics, shape and size make it ideal for adaptive re-use as a multipurpose performing arts auditorium.
- **West Central Community Center.** The facility will provide comprehensive child care, early childhood education services, health care for women and job readiness services for low-income families in west Spokane.
- **Inland Northwest Science and Technology Center.** The center will promote scientific research and provide classrooms for students and teachers.
- **Armed Forces and Aerospace Museum.** The building is being designed to house a 7,000-piece artifact collection.

Finding a New Primary

In September, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the popular blanket primary, in which all candidates from all parties are listed on one ballot. While nobody wants to give up the blanket primary, leaving Olympia without finding a replacement for it would be irresponsible.

Here is a very brief description of options:

Closed primary

Voters receive only the ballot of the party they are registered with.

Pro: It's easy to administer.

Con: Voters unwilling to publicly identify with a party are excluded from primary elections.

Open primary, private choice (Montana)

Voters receive ballots for each qualifying major party. They select one to complete; the remainder are returned. Each party's nominees are determined by the results of the submitted primary ballots.

Pro: Voters get to choose a ballot on Election Day and that choice is kept private.

Con: An independent voter has to choose one party's ballot on Election Day.

Top two advance (Cajun)

Any candidate who receives more than 50 percent of the vote in the primary is elected automatically. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote, there's a November run-off of the top two. Under Secretary of State Sam Reed's version, only a candidate with more than 99 percent of the vote would be automatically elected.

Pro: It's similar to nonpartisan races at the local level.

Con: It will reduce a voter's philosophical choice at the general election if two candidates from the same party advance, or if no minor party candidates ever appear on the ballot.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)

Voters rank candidates: 1, 2, 3, etc. If no candidate receives a majority of the No. 1 votes, the candidate with the fewest No. 1 votes is eliminated. The ballots of voters who preferred the eliminated candidate are reviewed, and their second-place votes are awarded to the remaining candidates. The ballots are recounted and candidates are eliminated this way until one winner has the majority of votes.

Pro: It maximizes participation by allowing a voter to support his/her first choice without feeling that the vote is wasted. It also gives a voice to minor parties.

Con: In essence, there is no primary. Voters will be confused when trying to learn how their votes will be counted.

No Primary

If the Legislature doesn't act, it's not clear which system would go into place. Parties could end up choosing candidates at a convention or caucus.

Pro: No cost.

Con: Unaffiliated voters wouldn't be able to participate in the election.

Principles I'll Keep in Mind

We don't know how the parties will respond to any of these options, and legislators all have different opinions of which one will be the best replacement. Please know that as the debate proceeds, I will be focusing on an option that will preserve voters' choice and safeguard their privacy.

For more information about finding a replacement for the blanket primary, please go to our Web site at www.sdc.wa.gov.

Primary Response Card

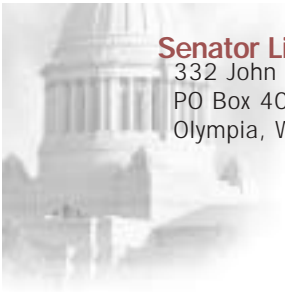
Which primary would you choose?

- ☐ A) Closed primary
- ☐ B) Open primary, private choice (Montana)
- ☐ C) Top two advance (Cajun)
- ☐ D) IRV
- ☐ E) No primary
- ☐ F) Undecided

Please fold bottom portion of this side of the newsletter up one-third and top portion down one-third so return address is showing.

Affix a stamp and send it back to my office.

When the session ends, I'll let you know which primary came out on top.



Senator Lisa Brown
332 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40403
Olympia, WA 98504-0403

PRSRT STD
US Postage
PAID
Olympia, WA
Permit #133



Senator Lisa Brown
332 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40403
Olympia, WA 98504-0403

Return Address

Place
First-Class
Postage
Here

